

Smith College Alumnae Oral History Project

Smith College Archives
Northampton, MA

Sarah Winawer-Wetzel, Class of 2005

Interviewed by
Hana Sarfan, Class of 2016

May 15, 2015

Abstract

In this interview, Sarah Winawer-Wetzler describes her house community and social life during her first semester at Smith. She details campus response to the attacks on September 11th and the divisiveness that resulted from the amending of the student constitution to include gender neutral pronouns. Winawer-Wetzler discusses personal challenges and how her Smith career continues to influence her personal and professional life.

Restrictions

None.

Format

Interview recorded using Canon Vixia HF.

Videographer

Video recorded by Kate Geis.

Transcript

Transcribed by Linda Pongetti, Audio Transcription Center.

Bibliography and Footnote Citation Forms

Video Recording

Bibliography: Winawer-Wetzler, Sarah. Interview by Hana Sarfan. Video recording, May 15, 2015. Smith College Alumnae Oral History Project, Smith College Archives. **Footnote:** Sarah Winawer-Wetzler, interview by Hana Sarfan, transcript of video recording, May 15, 2015, Smith College Alumnae Oral History Project, Smith College Archives.

Transcript

Bibliography: Winawer-Wetzler, Sarah. Interview by Hana Sarfan. Transcript of video recording, May 15, 2015. Smith College Alumnae Oral History Project, Smith College Archives. **Footnote:** Sarah Winawer-Wetzler, interview by Hana Sarfan, transcript of video recording, May 15, 2015, Smith College Alumnae Oral History Project, Smith College Archives, p. 3.

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Sophia Smith Collection
Smith College
Northampton, MA

Transcript of interview conducted May 15, 2015, with:

SARAH WINAWER-WETZEL
Northampton, MA

by: HANA SARFAN

SARFAN: Hey. So let's start out with why you chose to attend Smith.

WINAWER-WETZEL: Oh, my gosh, I didn't — wasn't one of those people who always knew that I — I had never had a first choice college. I had a lot of colleges that I was interested in and I sort of just gradually fell in love with Smith. The first — I remember the first person I ever met who went to Smith who was a year ahead of me, and I was, like, oh, that seems like the kind of person I want to be. So I definitely made sure to apply to Smith. That's the first time I'd ever heard of Smith, and I applied and Smith was in my top three. And I visited other — I visited all the schools and when it came down to the top three, I visited them all again, or I at least thought of visiting them all again. And I came back to Smith and I did another overnight, or I did my first overnight I'm not sure. And I just felt really at home here. I've loved the vibe of campus. I've felt really comfortable here as a queer woman. Everybody that I've met seemed really just interesting and exciting and really dynamic and for me it was like it doesn't matter if maybe for I'd have a better — I was really interested in writing. I applied to Oberlin and Oberlin has an amazing writing program and I was like that doesn't matter, like, Smith is the right place for me as a whole person. And I fell in love and I — there's — it was done like I was once I had my decision I was like this is the place for me.

SARFAN: Did it, like, how did you feel in your first couple months there? Did you feel like it was living up to those expectations? Were you like --

WINAWER-WETZEL: Yeah, actually, no, I felt like Smith was, but I didn't like where I was living. I didn't like living in Cushing. I felt like there weren't a lot of queer women there, which was not true but that's what I thought (laughs), which had enough of an impact. And it felt a little bit like I got to college and it felt like camp. Like, at camp you get there and people, like, form relationships

really quickly because the trajectory of time is so small. And it felt like people were doing that, but I was having trouble connecting with people at the same speed that everybody else was. And I think part of that was because I didn't have a first year roommate. I wound up in a single, for reasons just sort of random. There was a sophomore that didn't come or didn't — moved houses, so I wound up in her room, and it was hard because I think a first year roommate is a really formative part of the experience. Either you get along really well with them, or maybe you don't get a long super well, but you go and you, like, sort of have a buddy to go do things with in the beginning or you hate them and then you have something to talk about to other people (laughs) . But I didn't have anybody at the beginning. So I was -- I had to rely on the sophomores who actually were in a double across the hall from me who were very nice about not resenting me for having a single and welcomed me and tried to, you know, look out for me.

SARFAN: Yeah.

WINAWER-WETZEL: But I remember I was — it was lonely in the first couple of months. The first semester was definitely an adjustment period.

SARFAN: Yeah, and then how did — when did you start to feel (inaudible) —

WINAWER-WETZEL: Yeah, and breakfast was salty (laughter). What were you asking me?

SARFAN: Oh, so when did you start to feel like more comfortable in terms of friendships and --

WINAWER-WETZEL: I think it was more gradual. I think by the second semester I started to feel like I had more of a home here and it took time. I always remember liking my classes. I really had great classes my first year so, I think I felt more at home in the classroom than I did socially for a while. But then, you know, you start to meet people, and you start to make friends. I can't pinpoint it anymore, it just — even looking back I think more optimistically I was probably more — I remember it more happily than it probably was. I know I had a hard time the first semester, because I remember saying that, but when I look back on my time at Smith it's hard for me to remember not feeling at home here because I mean by the end of my sophomore year this was, like, my place like when I went abroad I cried (laughs). I was like what am I doing? I'm leaving this place I'm so happy in. I met so many friends. I'm in a relationship, like what I doing getting on this plane (laughs)? But I knew intellectually that

going abroad was going to be a great experience, but I remember coming back my senior year. I was really glad to be back, but also different from being abroad.

SARFAN: And then you moved houses out of Cushing?

WINAWER-WETZEL: Yeah, so my — when I came back my sophomore year to Cushing, I had decided that I really wanted to live in Hopkins in the co-op. And I knew that it was hard to get into, because it was so small. So I thought oh, if I put in an application now in my sophomore year for my senior year I'll definitely be able to get in when I come back. And I put it in and I think the guy's name was Randy, the housing coordinator back then. I vaguely remember that. He, like, called me and was like there's an open double. Actually, there's two open doubles do you want to move into one? And I was, like, OK, I do. And so I moved in like November of my sophomore year to switch houses, and Cush — Hopkins was amazing. It was a really good fit for me. It was so small. It was very food centered. I love food. I loved cooking. I loved having jobs to do that were around food and the house really came together around food. Hopkins was a big part of feeling more comfortable for me. We had a really just great vibe especially that sophomore year. We had lots of fun.

SARFAN: Where did you go abroad?

WINAWER-WETZEL: I went abroad to Hamburg. It was a really small program that year. Only, there was seven students total, and only four of them were from Smith. We had two Mount Holyoke and one guy from Bucknell. So it was a really small experience, but it was amazing. I had wanted to learn German. I grew up speaking German with my father who is German and immigrated here. And I — one of my big goals for college was to come out being fluent in one language besides English. And so I took German classes. I'd never taken any formal German classes before I got to Smith and I took them here and I got up to speed in language and I knew that going abroad would really solidify that for me. And so I did and it was a really — it was awesome. It was also really hard I think it took six months before I felt at home there. And by the time the year ended I could have — I was really at home there and felt really comfortable. So it was — I cried on the plane back (laughs). I cried on the way there. I cried on the way back (laughter). I was very emotional, but I had a wonderful time there. And I got to travel a lot and I got to see my family from my father's side lives in Germany, and so I got to see them a lot which was wonderful and special.

SARFAN: Wow.

WINAWER-WETZEL: Yeah.

SARFAN: Well, that's great. I am curious about, like, in your years at Smith do you have things that you remember doing that were really fun, like, that you loved doing with your friends?

WINAWER-WETZEL: Uh-huh, I remember doing a lot of just like sitting around in the hallways or in people's rooms, drinking or not drinking with just like hanging out and talking probably a lot on people's beds. There seemed to always be somebody who was like a junior or senior who had a really comfortable bed figured out, and so we'd all pile on there. I think my senior year when I came back I was like I'm getting a futon (laughs) and I that was part of it is I remember this culture of, like, flopping on somebody's bed and chatting. There was a lot of that. I remember being naked a lot (laughs). I feel like I talked to my wife, who didn't go to Smith about her college experience and, I think she had uniformly way more drinking. And we had way more nudity (laughs), like, I think there were so many things that I can remember where we were, like, half naked, or fully naked jumping in the pond or going skinny dipping somewhere. That was fun. And I loved cooking. I looked cooking at Hopkins House. I — you could come down at 3 o'clock in the morning in the middle of writing a paper and somebody would be like I decided we needed chocolate chip cookies, so I'm making chocolate chip cookies. Do you want coconut in them? What do you think? And that would be great.

SARFAN: Yes.

WINAWER-WETZEL: And I loved sort of that house community, and it always smelled like food when you walked in, which made it smell like home. I think that the others houses here feel homey in a different way, but Hopkins felt like home because it smelled like food.

SARFAN: Yeah. And what were your — how did your academic interests evolve?

WINAWER-WETZEL: I had no idea what I wanted to major in. I knew I liked writing. I took some writing classes. I thought I would be a women's studies major, I thought I'd be a sociology major, and then I realized I should just be a comp lit major. I knew that it would let me take lots of German classes. I loved reading literature and reading books, and that was great except in order to be a comp lit major I had to take a whole bunch of required courses which were all in the ancient things such as Greek, the Enid, the Iliad, we'd do a lot of Shakespeare, and my interests are much more

towards like 1900s and forward. So that was a little painful for me, but probably healthy, you know, like broccoli, you have to take — you have to eat that stuff (laughter). But I had wonderful classes. I loved the comp lit major because I didn't have to take — I could take courses outside the comp lit department. I could take the African American literature or the African American studies, I could take them in English, I could take them in German, I could take anything that had a book I could take that course. Anything that had like literature in it, I could take it and count towards the major which is a lot of fun.

SARFAN: Cool.

WINAWER-WETZEL: Yeah. And when I went to Hamburg I came back and I had enough credits to be a double major in German, so I did that which has gotten me nowhere and like none of those things I've done anything with, but they were fun.

SARFAN: Yeah.

WINAWER-WETZEL: Yeah.

SARFAN: What was the political climate like when you were on campus?

WINAWER-WETZEL: So from a democrat — democratic republican side it was leaned very heavily democrat. I remember that the Smith Republicans when they did anything had to, like, recruit from UMass and the Amherst, like, do republican co-events with them because they didn't have enough republicans here.

So, you know, when it came to, like, national elections the campus swung very heavily democrat, and probably even a little bit to the left of that. What I remember very formatively from my time here was September 11th, which happened, like, a week after classes started, maybe not even, which totally disrupted everybody's world in different ways. I didn't have anybody close to me that was affected, but it was just a really stark moment and everybody coming together. So that was very formative for people and that was, I think I remember thinking they hadn't had an all-campus meeting since, like, Pearl Harbor, and they had one for September 11th —

SARFAN: Wow.

WINAWER-WETZEL: -- because nobody knew what to do. But it was hard, I think it was really hard just like in the rest of the country it was really hard for the Muslim-American students here and anybody like who didn't look I wouldn't say didn't look white but maybe who looked like they might be affiliated with Arab countries or being

Muslim, I think it was hard. I remember hearing that the interim president had them over periodically for dinner just to offer support to them. But, I think that was really hard for them. And then I always think that there's always — the students always are doing something political in the spring. I don't know what it is about the spring semester, like, people get, like, antsy over the winter, but there's always something that happens in the spring and my year was precipitated by some racial and homophobic slurs that got written on people's doors. It was in a couple of different houses targeting a couple of different students. And it really galvanized the campus to try and do something. And there were brown outs sitting in dining halls. We sat in at the — in College Hall, and things like that, and there were -- there was a list of, like, 19 demands presented around issues of color, for students of color, but it was really tense. It was really tense, and there was — I don't know if there was open conflict, but it was just a really intense environment, like, I think it was that semester — the second semester of my first year where I was taking a course with Kevin Quashie in the African American studies department and I was really grateful because he would give us space in class to talk about what was happening on campus. Like, his syllabus was aggressive to begin with, like, we were never going to cover everything on there, and because of the things that happened on campus, we definitely didn't, but he understood that that was an important part of our education and having the space to talk about what was going on was really helpful. So he was an amazing professor in those — in those really emotional weeks.

SARFAN:

Yeah.

WINAWER-WETZEL:

So that's what campus felt like. That was just my first year and poor John Connelly the interim president was like they promised me a quiet year and it was not quiet. So we had an all-campus meeting in the spring as well around those incidents which was like, which is almost never a good idea in those circumstances because people get up and just are really emotional, and it's really easy for people to be, like -- to attack each other in a public forum, which it's not usually productive. But it was yeah, that was intense (laughs).

And then my sophomore year, I don't remember anything in particular and then I remember voting in my first election the fall of my first year. I remember for voting for whoever the democratic was for the governor of Massachusetts. I remember being really sad for my first election. The guy I voted for didn't win or maybe it was a woman I don't even remember, it was a democrat (laughs). And then I remember coming back my senior year and feeling very, like I had a very

different perspective I felt, you know, very worldly and I felt less all consumed by the issues on campus. I didn't feel like campus was my whole bubble anymore. There were still issues and there were still sit-ins and things like that but I felt less consumed by them.

While I was abroad was when they changed the student constitution to have gender neutral pronouns, and that was really intense, but I was not here for that. But I remember hearing from people that it was really intense. And even now, I think people remember that as a really stressful moment, because they changed celebration to be celebration from celebration of sisterhood was the original name, and it was all of this I think the campus lore is that the trans men students on campus were the ones who did that which is not true, I will go on record. They – I remember so vividly at a bunch of male Smith students standing at the walkway by the presidents house on the way to celebration handing out bags of tea — they were the tea from the tea committee then and they're like Smith brothers supporting our Smith sisters, and they were so – they felt so strongly like there was a place for celebration women at Smith and that not everything had to be inclusive of the trans identity in that moment, the trans male identity. But gender neutral pronoun still happened and celebration of sisterhood still became celebration, but, which I think, like, I think that the campus evolves and like there's — it's hard to change that as an individual but for me what's really important is that the people who didn't cause that don't get blamed for causing it like the people who don't agree with that I'm always like no, it was always just — it was a bunch of women (laughs) who wanted to be inclusive of trans students of students who are gender queer, they wanted to do that.

SARFAN: Uh-huh.

WINAWER-WETZEL: But it was another really divisive issue on campus and, I think that the vote was really, really close to go to gender-neutral pronouns. And I think they may have even tried to vote on it again, like, a year later. It was really intense on campus. I was a little bit grateful to be in Hamburg –

SARFAN: Yeah.

WINAWER-WETZEL: -- at that time.

SARFAN: OK, so you weren't there for the celebrations?

WINAWER-WETZEL: No, I don't think I was there the year it switched over. I think I came back my senior year they had changed it.

SARFAN: So that was kind of around the time that trans students were starting to get like a lot more common and –

WINAWER-WETZEL: Yeah.

SARFAN: -- I think at Smith? So that's an interesting.

WINAWER-WETZEL: I think they were always, I mean I think they were around a lot. I don't ever remember like I remember I got to campus and somebody I don't even remember if I asked or somebody just was, like, yeah, that person's trans. We -- he uses male pronouns and he's a guy. And I was just like OK, like, I don't remember it being presented as like a new thing (laughs) on campus. I do think that over the time I was at Smith you saw younger and younger trans male students. I think you saw people transitioning earlier and earlier, but I think that sort of goes with the general country, like, as education happens and opportunities come out for parents to know what's going on to be supportive to their kids, I think that comes — that comes with people knowing who they are and being able to identity as they are earlier and earlier.

SARFAN: Yeah. So what was the relationship of the students to the administration on these kinds of issues, like, did the students feel like the administration was being supportive?

WINAWER-WETZEL: Oh, no, never, come on, students feeling the administration being supportive (laughs)? Never. So my perspective on this is really formed by my senior year in my comp lit senior seminar. We got to choose our own topic. So every year the comp lit majors decide what they want their topic to be, and then everybody gets to prepare one and lead on class and teach essentially the other students about their specific part of their topic. So to be more specific, we chose oppression and rebellion as our topic. And then everybody had to represent something within that topic.

And one student chose, like, sadomasochism and, like, BDSM relationships and we're like watch the secretary and read the story of O and somebody else chose I don't even know, something else in that, and I chose student revelation and student rebellion. So I looked and studied not just the general, like, 1968 student rebellions, but also specifically experiences at Smith from that second semester of my sophomore year with the 19 demands and sort of Smith's history of having movements and as part of that entried — interviewed Maria Mahoney who, I think was the dean of the college then who had a really interesting perspective on it because she had been a student during the 1968 student movements so she has a really strong

connection to that. And I remember her saying to me when the students have sit-ins, you know, when they have organizations, and protests, and things like that that's how they're communicating to us, like we as the administration need the students to do this so that they bring things to our attention. And I thought that was a really insightful and sophisticated way to think about it. She didn't feel like the administration was in conflict with the students, I mean there's always going to be a pushing back and forth of reality and practicality and things like that, and what the students I think will always be a little bit more idealists and will always push the administration in the direction that it needs to go and the administration will always be slower because it's, you know, bureaucratic.

SARFAN: Yeah.

WINAWER-WETZEL: But, I think so I think yeah, the students were always in conflict with the administration, but I think the administration although it wasn't always clear to the students I think they had — they appreciated it. Maybe they didn't appreciate everything, but overall they had a healthy — seemed to have a health attitude towards it.

SARFAN: Yeah, wow, that is really insightful. Let's see, do you — can you think of a challenge that you overcame while you were at Smith?

WINAWER-WETZEL: Let's see, I mean it's hard — I'm sure there were lots of challenges. What comes to mind is that my second semester of my first year I started dating somebody who went into a deep, deep clinical depression and I didn't — I didn't know really how to articulate what was happening and I could sense that I was something that she was holding onto from a normal world because I'm — I was not depressed, and I'm a pretty happy person by nature. And as she became more and more depressed she became more and more isolated from her friends. She'd been like a really outstanding student and a really gifted piano student and stopped going to classes. She wound up having to withdraw at the end of the semester because her grades were so poor that like she couldn't keep — have them on her record.

SARFAN: Wow.

WINAWER-WETZEL: And she went from like not smoking to smoking three packs a day, I mean like deep, deep clinical depression.

SARFAN: Yes.

WINAWER-WETZEL: And it was very hard for me to protect myself during that and I think her friend saw what was happening, but like didn't know necessarily the full amount of what was happening and, I think it took -- it took some healing and, like, time to get over that just to — I didn't know how to protect myself in a relationship. I hadn't had like deep, intensive relationship like that before. So that was hard.

SARFAN: Yeah.

WINAWER-WETZEL: Yeah.

SARFAN: What did you feel like were some expectations, or stereotypes for the typical Smithy at that time?

WINAWER-WETZEL: I think the general expectations and stereotypes don't seem very different to me today as they were then like outspoken, going to tell you what's on her mind whether you like it or not, like, Smithy's always have an opinion. I think we're the kind of people that make things happen and get things done. And, I think that sort of stereotype was there when I was here.

SARFAN: Uh-huh.

WINAWER-WETZEL: But for me, I think that Smithy's are so diverse, like, they're so many different types of people that were here, I mean there were the people who put on makeup and got dressed in real clothing every day and went to class, and there were people who barely struggled to wear any clothing to class (laughter), and you'd have people who are really go getters and people who are more dreamers. I always felt like, I mean I think this is part of every college, but when you go to college even if you were a loner in high school, you find your people, like, there's, you know, the Smith SSFFS Society, like, the science fiction nerds, they have a whole group and the republicans have a group and, like, I think — I think there were so many stereotypes within Smith of different people, I think there were like green streets, stereotypes of quads, stereotypes in center campus stereotypes but I didn't feel like there was maybe one big one except maybe a sense of liberated sexuality. I think and not just in terms of like gay, straight, bi, but in terms of just having a sexuality and like being aware of your body and how it functioned. I remember (laughs) my first year one of my housemates in Cushing was muslin and her mom had not ether take sex ed classes in high school and like we drew her out the vagina and we're like this is what it looks like. And she was like no, there are not three holes and we're like yes, there are (laughs) and this is how your body works. And so I feel like that sort of pervasive like owning your

sexuality and owning our body was, I think that was fairly Smithy standard.

SARFAN: And that was probably, obviously related to just a larger feminist standpoint.

WINAWER-WETZEL: Yeah, and I think also like when you get a place that's full of women, like, it becomes the norm, I mean like that's for me what Smith is that we live in a world today still were men run things and women are not expected to be able to do everything. And, I think one of the reasons why I find the Smith education, so valuable is like you need to brainwash yourself, like you need to spend four years here so you really internalize that women can do everything. Like, I was in the Leading Ladies Musical Theater Group. We didn't have any men. We're open to them auditioning, but they never did. So we just played all the parts.

SARFAN: Yes.

WINAWER-WETZEL: And we — you know, Smith -- Smithy's run the student government like we just do everything and there's no having to claim your space from men and I think that that's really formative when you go out into the real world and you do have to do it. I mean you can tell when you run into Smithy's or other people who went to women's colleges. You can tell us part because we don't have the same acceptance of the societal bullshit that men are going to be in charge of everything, or that, you know, they're going to run the meetings. We'll speak up, we're there, we'll be heard, we'll take space, and, I think that's what you need Smith for.

SARFAN: Yeah. Do you think that that has impacted you a lot in your career, in your personal life?

WINAWER-WETZEL: Yeah. Yeah, I think Smith taught me how to be really thoughtful, and how to think, and how to write well, but also how to be independent and just do — just do my life and not question it based on necessarily what the rules are, you know, I worked for a couple years. I stayed in Northampton after Smith and I worked for two different local non-profits. One of them was the Northampton Survival Center, which is a food pantry and I was there for a couple years, and I was like I want — I want to do this, I want to run a non-profit with a business heart. Oh, that's what my boss said she said, "I want to run this with a business mind and a non-profit heart."

SARFAN: Yeah.

WINAWER-WETZEL: And I was like that's what I want to do and so I went to business school and I had that — I think thankfully went to school where it was all non-profit focused. So I got that same sort of internalized sense of, like, I want to change the world, I want to make the world a better place, and that's OK and that's a valuable — that's a valuable thing to do. And so and now I work at a hospital — a non-profit hospital for called Dana Farber. It's a cancer hospital, and I'm a project manager, and I make things happen. And I — Smith is just a core part of my identity. I can't imagine not having gone here. I think I would have been happy in a number of other places, but Smith has become such a wonderful, formative part of my identity and it's really cool to be back and to see other people and remember. It sort of brings back that vibe of being here on campus in a wonderful way.

SARFAN: Yeah, definitely. So Smith is a place that has all these traditions and then it seems to always be changing itself. And when you think about the way that Smith has changes since you graduated do you see anything big, or does it seem similar?

WINAWER-WETZEL: I mean a lot of it seems similar. I think that change is really hard but it will always happen. And I think that you'll — I remember when I think I was a junior or senior is when they consolidated the dining and people were so upset about the consolidated dining. Until you pointed out that like some people were like excuse me, like we're — we never had a dining hall in years. We're like — we're like in this house and like people were already in semi-consolidated dining and they just consolidated it further. But that's also when they stopped having the same meal for dinner, every single night in every single house. So it added so much in terms of culinary diversity and it also meant that you mingled more like I would go to Hubbard House because they had really amazing sweet potato fries which they weren't going to have. Well, I was in Hopkins, I was not supposed to be eating in any of the dining halls, but I got in there (laughs).

So, you know, those kinds of changes I think are just that's life. I think the recent change to admit trans women and be really clear about how they're going to admit trans women is awesome, I was really disappointed in how long it took Smith because, like, when Wellesley and I don't think Wellesley's done it yet, but in Mount Holyoke they did. They did, yeah. I mean like when Wellesley and Mount Holyoke beat us and like the little, tiny liberal arts schools, like I expect Smith to be more of a leader.

SARFAN: Uh-huh.

WINAWER-WETZEL: We're just a little slower sometimes, but, I think the students and the alums from Smith are so progressive generally, not all of us, but that we expect the college to move a little bit more quickly. But I listened to some of the — I made some calls after they made the study group decision and they had some for people who are volunteering around reunion, and they had some for people who are volunteering around classes or admissions volunteers. And I was both a reunion volunteer and a class volunteer and I missed the reunion call so I called into the class one of the admissions volunteers and I heard from all my friends who were on the reunion call that they like everybody was like yay, this is a great decision like we understand how to talk about it, we have a couple questions but no big deal. On my call it was a big deal, like, people were really upset. Not everybody, but there was some people like I don't know how to reconcile this, like, I love Smith, but, like, we're going to lose students over this like I don't feel like I can be proud of Smith anymore. Like, people were really upset. And so I realized that the pace at which Smith moved while not ideal for those of us who thought it was a long time coming that's how they have to — they couldn't make it a quick decision, because it would have been very hard for the alums that were not in favor of it. But, I think when they have like a very thoughtful process it allows them to sort of bring some of the late adapters to the process and help them get to hopefully, on the right side of things. I mean there are going to be alums who are always going to have an issue with it –

SARFAN: Yeah.

WINAWER-WETZEL: – but you — Smith is never going to be perfect. Like there are things are Smith that I don't agree with necessarily but I still feel like Smith in general is an institution that I support mostly because of the people I think that the people who come out of Smith are amazing. And the institution can change a bunch of little things, but the culture I think is pretty well formed and that's — that will always evolve but I think the force of it will stay there.

SARFAN: Uh-huh, yeah. Do you have any advice that you would give to (inaudible) Smith students?

WINAWER-WETZEL: (laughs) I always joke that I wish I had been more single. You never have such an available dating pool than you do when you're in college. Let's see, I never took a Five College class I always said I would. I'm not sure that that was a huge loss, but I sort of always thought it would have been cool. Go abroad even if it's hard. Even if you think it's a terrible mistake, and do it in a place where you're learning another language — because it's so

easy to learn a language when you're in college, and to really immerse yourself it's just — it's a gift and I was — when I finished my year abroad in Hamburg, you couldn't really tell me a part from a German. Maybe you thought, like, I had a weird, kind of a weird accent but my German was pretty perfect.

SARFAN: Wow.

WINAWER-WETZEL: And I remember that feeling of just like what, these words are just coming out. Look at my grammatical formations, they're amazing (laughter) like I just was really fluent and I thought fluently and wrote fluently and I'll never get that again unless I live there. And I try — I try and speak German with my dad, and I'm trying to teach my son German even though my German's not that great. But I think that learning a language is one of the biggest gifts you can give yourself. And, I think it's — Smith makes it pretty easy. Do Praxis, I think Praxis is awesome. I spent my Praxis in Northern Ireland working with a storyteller.

SARFAN: Wow.

WINAWER-WETZEL: I mean it was such a cool experience. And the Praxis funding at that point, I think was \$2,000, which covered, like, my flight and, like, this much money. But it was an amazing experience. I thought I wanted to do children's literature and it was such a cool thing to follow a storyteller around and listen to her tell stories and just — I lived with — she ran a hostel and I lived in her hostel, and cleaned the hostel, and followed around and just helped her and got to shadow her a lot and it was awesome. And that was just a really, cool experience. Those things I think are really formative.

SARFAN: Uh-huh. Yeah.

WINAWER-WETZEL: Yeah.

SARFAN: I have one quick question. You mentioned you have a son?

WINAWER-WETZEL: Yeah.

SARFAN: So you're in the thick of, you know, trying to figure out working and —

WINAWER-WETZEL: Yes.

SARFAN: — parenting a child. How are you experiencing that?

WINAWER-WETZEL: Yeah.

SARFAN: If you could give any advice?

WINAWER-WETZEL: Yeah, I think that being married to another woman is — makes it a lot easier because the conversation starts from scratch. There's no expectations of I'm going to do this, and you're going to do that, and I'm going to be the primary person and you're going to be the secondary person. I mean I gave birth to him, so there are some things only I can do. But pretty much everything else we split 50/50. It's really hard to balance work and family. It's definitely an adjustment.

I chose -- my wife has a formal program at her work where she can chose to go back at 80 percent, and so she did that. And I presented that to my boss and I was like I want to come back at 80 percent and even though my company doesn't really have a formal program they're like OK, you can do that. And so both of us are home one day a week and I love my days home with him. They're really hard. Being at home fulltime with a kid is much, much harder than being at work, much, much harder. Being at work was like I came back off maternity leave and I was just like you want me to sit in a meeting, just like don't do anything, just listen? This is great. This is a vacation. I'll do this all day (laughter). But I like my days home with him very much. And it's the right balance for me, but I right after I got back my direct supervisor left and she'd taken a job elsewhere, and her position was open. And people were like oh, you going to apply for it? And I was like I don't know, like, maybe. And I talked with the VP of my department a little bit and she was like oh, I think you can do it. Like, you're welcome to apply if you want, but I don't think that you could do this director position and be 80 percent. Like, I think this is a full time position at 100 percent. And I thought about it and I real — like that was the first time where I was like I'm putting my family first, like and I'm putting me first. Maybe it's better for my career to try and put myself up for this position, but I really, like, my 80 percent. I was so freshly back from my maternity leave. I was still adjusting and I was like I need a year to just settle in as mom and employee, like, and I read a really nice description of this and sometimes you just put your career on cruise control so you can concentrate on your family. And then later, you can put your family on cruise control and try and accelerate in your career. And that resonated for me a lot because I can't accelerate my career right now. I would like to, but actually when it comes down to it but I'm more interested in having my day with my son and I'm just, like, letting myself settle into this role. But of course, you have all these, like, guilt right like I should be here, I'm Smithy. Like I should be taking over the world. I should do everything (laughter). But it's, I

think important to know that, like, being a whole person also a part of life and you need to have the space and time to do that.

And, I think that's actually one of the struggles that a lot of alums have is that they see in the quarterly like you — oh, I published my book. I got my PhD, like, I got married, I bought a house, I did all of those things in five minutes, you know, like, there's this culture of superlative achievement.

SARFAN: Yes.

WINAWER-WETZEL: And it's ridiculous and it's insane. I'm a secretary for my class so I know exactly what percent of people write it and it's such a small percentage. And so I've tried to start a conversation with my class about like maybe you read a book, that's also an achievement. I have not read a book (laughs) from cover to cover in a while. Maybe you, like, took a trip somewhere. Maybe that somewhere was the next town over and you had a nice time at the beach like it doesn't have to be that you like went to Europe. It doesn't have to be that you bought a house, it could be just, like, you're moved out of your parents' house. I want to celebrate the ordinate achievements because you know of all the Smithy's in the world. Like, a small fraction of them are going to get the Nobel prizes and become president, and rule the world, and the rest of us are just going to be really great people making change in small increments in our own lives and being full and interesting people. I mean the Smithy's that I'm in touch with in my life today are the most interesting people that I know, and we can talk about anything and, you know, even my fellow Smithy's who have parents, it's really easy when you're talking with a parent to just talk about your child's poop all day (laughs) and we will do that. And then we'll be like well, did you read what's happening in Turkey and we'll go into that. Actually, I remember my friend who's a Smithy is a mom of twins do you know about Ferguson? And she was like I haven't read the news, I have no idea what's going on. I was like all right, let me brief you on Ferguson. She was like OK, thank you (laughter) because I mean, like, we could have those conversations and like so we're full people even if we're not making headlines for running the world and I think that's very important. And I think it's hard. I think a lot of alums have guilt about not achieving enough and I hope that we can start — I mean that will always be there, but I hope we can pass that again.

SARFAN: Yeah. Well, I think we have a few minutes left.

SARFAN1: Let me see what we have on our schedule. Who's the next person come in?

SARFAN: Should be around 10:00.

SARFAN1: OK, so 10:30 is Paula Ferris. It looks like we have the next person here already.

SARFAN: OK.

SARFAN1: Is it -- do you know what time it is?

SARFAN: It's 10:35.

SARFAN1: Oh, OK, late actually.

SARFAN: That was a fabulous answer.

WINAWER-WETZEL: Oh, thank you.

SARFAN1: Yeah, that was great.

WINAWER-WETZEL: Awesome.

SARFAN1: All those were great answers.

WINAWER-WETZEL: Thank you.

SARFAN1: Thank you so much.

WINAWER-WETZEL: Yeah, this was great. Thank you so much.

SARFAN1: Yeah.

END OF INTERVIEW

Transcribed by Linda Pongetti, June 2016.